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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 004190

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STATE PASS AIT/W

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SUBJECT: TAIWAN'S APEC DIPLOMACY: ROUND TWO

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary. For the second time in as many months, Taiwan launched an APEC initiative that met quick refusal in Beijing. First, it was President Chen Shui-bian's July 22 announcement that he intended to personally represent Taiwan at the November APEC leaders' meeting in Pusan, which Beijing quickly rejected. The second attempt was President Chen's announcement to the South Koreans on October 12 that he will send Legislative Yuan (LY) Speaker and Kuomintang Party (KMT) legislator Wang Jin-pyng to represent Taiwan in Pusan, which met a similar rejection. The gallant offer of KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou to help facilitate the visit of his rival Wang, however, ran aground when the KMT learned that Beijing had privately rejected the Wang overture weeks earlier. This suggested, at least to the KMT, that Chen's announcement may have had more to do with painting Beijing as the oppressor and splitting the opposition KMT than with Taiwan representation at APEC. End Summary.

2. (C) President Chen personally informed South Korean special envoy Yun Hai-jung on October 12 of his decision to appoint Wang to represent Taiwan in Pusan. Presidential Secretary General Yu Shyi-kun then informed the press that

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Chen had told the envoy he was appointing Wang "to avoid making things difficult for South Korea." At the same press conference, Presidential Deputy Secretary General James Huang said the U.S. had welcomed the appointment of Wang. Later the same day, PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesman Kong Quan stated the PRC's strong opposition to Wang's presence at APEC because of the 1991 APEC MOU which, Kong said, permitted "Chinese Taipei" only to dispatch the minister in charge of economic affairs related to APEC to attend APEC summits.

Round One: President Chen to Pusan

3. (C) Three months earlier, on July 22, President Chen Shui-bian announced that he wanted to personally attend the November APEC leaders' meeting in Pusan. The ROK Taiwan Trade Office Political Chief told AIT at the time that Taiwan NSC officials had given the ROK Trade Office "a few days" warning that President Chen might announce his intention to personally attend the leaders' summit. Meeting with Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General James Huang, the Director pointed out that any such initiative to have a serious chance of success should include prior consultations with AIT (Huang himself had informed the Director, but only on Friday afternoon, July 22, just before the press was informed). Several weeks later, Huang told the Deputy Director that Taipei had fully realized Beijing would not accept Chen's overture and that the real intention had been to demonstrate to the international community Taiwan's willingness to engage the PRC and even make concessions, such as Chen's announcement that he would accept the nomenclature of "Taiwan, China."

Round Two: Speaker Wang to Pusan

4. (C) On September 16, NSC Secretary General Chiou I-jen informed the Acting Director that if President Chen was not able to attend the APEC leaders' meeting, he was considering sending LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng as Taiwan's representative. Wang, he said, had indicated to Chen his interest in the idea without making any firm commitment. Chiou asked if the U.S. would convey this message to Beijing and ascertain Beijing's view of the idea. The Acting Director noted that Wang could be problematic, because traditionally the Taiwan representative has been non-government, whereas Wang is a senior government official. Chiou acknowledged this problem, but argued that Beijing would find LY Speaker and KMT leader Wang "interesting" and would "not get hung up on the issue of official position."

5. (C) Chiou then informed the Acting Director that Taipei "requests U.S. help" to prepare the way for the Wang appointment. When asked if there had been any effort to float this on any basis with either Beijing or this year's host, the ROK, Chiou said no. Three days later, the Acting Director informed Chiou that Washington believed it would be more appropriate for Taiwan to utilize its own channels to

inform Beijing and Seoul about the Wang proposal.

16. (C) Seoul Taipei Representative Hwang told the Director on October 14 that just before Ambassador Yun departed Seoul, he had received a call from Taipei's representative in Seoul informing him of Taiwan's intention to nominate Wang Jin-pyng. The Korean MFA did not have a chance to review this issue before Yoon departed, therefore Hwang had to deliver Seoul's negative reaction, that it could not support Wang's participation, in a separate meeting at Taipei's MOFA on October 15.

17. (C) Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General James Huang told the Director on October 14 that, though unlikely, Kong Quan may have answered the question in the way he did to leave the door open for Wang to attend the informal leaders' meeting while still looking tough on Taiwan. If so, Huang continued, perhaps the U.S. could pursue this possibility with Beijing. Meanwhile, Huang told the Director, Taipei is pursuing its own channels to try to communicate on this subject with Beijing, details of which he was not now authorized to share with AIT.

Chairman Ma Deftly Weighs In

18. (C) Following Beijing's announcement on October 13 that it would not accept Wang, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou stepped in and told Wang that the party fully supported his appointment and would try to help facilitate Beijing's approval. According to the local press, Ma telephoned Wang and expressed the party's support for his trip to Pusan. In a smart political move, he also offered to utilize the KMT-CCP party-to-party channel that had been established following former KMT Chairman Lien Chan's April visit to Mainland China. Wang, according to press reports, expressed appreciation for Ma's offer and pledged to meet with Ma in person once Wang's trip is confirmed. Ma then directed KMT Research Director Chang Jung-kung to communicate with PRC officials via the party-to-party mechanism to help facilitate Wang's participation in the Pusan meeting.

19. (C) Chang Jung-kung told AIT late on October 14 that he immediately contacted the PRC side to initiate Ma's directive. The PRC, however, informed Chang that both the Chen government and Wang himself had separately approached Beijing "a month ago" to propose the idea of Wang's appointment. The PRC had rejected both overtures at that time, the KMT was told, not only because of the publicly stated reason (inappropriate representation) but also because Beijing believed Chen intended the Wang appointment to influence future Taiwan elections and to split the KMT. (Comment: In fact, Chairman Ma's initial response to the October 12 announcement of Wang's appointment was very cool, suspicious and non-supportive.)

110. (C) When KMT leaders learned that Wang himself had been rejected, Chang explained to AIT, they realized that the special party-to-party mechanism had been effectively closed to them before they had even started. Chang indicated that the KMT does not plan to make further efforts on behalf of a Wang visit. Noting that Lien Chan himself had arrived in Beijing yesterday, October 13, and will have dinner with PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Director Chun Yunlin, Chang said there were no plans to request Lien to weigh in on the Wang issue.

Comment

111. (C) So why, several weeks after receiving Beijing's informal rejection of the Wang Jin-pyng proposal, did President Chen go ahead and make the Wang proposal to Ambassador Yun and make such a big deal of it to the press? This appears to fit the pattern of the first Chen proposal which was offered, not as a viable, realistic possibility, but to demonstrate once more how the PRC is suppressing Taiwan and how Beijing rejects every Taiwan goodwill offer. In the scandal-ridden crisis atmosphere now prevailing in Taiwan, this may be viewed by Chen as a useful diversionary tactic. Ma's offer to be helpful may help shelter him from being lumped with the mainland by President Chen.
PAAL